



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WSDA continues to offer Johne's Disease testing for cattle

OLYMPIA – Cattle owners can have their animals tested – free of charge – for Johne's Disease by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. The program, funded through a U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperative agreement, has been extended through July 2005.

Johne's Disease, also called paratuberculosis, is a bacterial disease of the intestinal tract that is spread easily from one animal to another. The disease, which can be fatal, is found in about 22 percent of dairy herds and 8 percent of beef cattle herds nationwide.

Johne's is generally introduced to a herd from an outside animal that carries the disease, but appears to be healthy. In addition to cattle, the disease occurs in a number of hooved animals, including sheep, goats, deer, antelope and bison.

"The Johne's Disease Control Program is a great opportunity for cattle owners to take advantage of free testing to determine if the disease is on the farm, and to have a customized risk assessment performed by your certified veterinarian," said Dick Vetter, a WSDA veterinarian coordinating the state's Johne's program. "Your veterinarian will be paid to do a complete herd assessment and evaluate animal-raising practices, from calving to milking. A plan, specific for the herd, will then be developed with the owner/manager to reduce the likelihood of transmission of Johne's and other intestinal diseases."

The program emphasis is on performing risk assessments. To determine the prevalence of the disease in a particular herd, the state will pay for testing of up to 300 head. A risk assessment and a herd management plan must be completed to participate. WSDA will reimburse the private veterinarian for the planning efforts. The program only applies to cattle.

If you are interested in having a risk assessment or a herd management plan completed, contact your veterinarian or Dick Vetter at (360) 902-1878 (dvetter@agr.wa.gov). For more information on Johne's Disease, go to the University of Wisconsin Johne's Web site at <http://www.johnes.org> or the U.S. Animal Health Association site at <http://www.usaha.org/committees/jd/jd.shtml>.

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